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DE RUEHIL #1999/01 1511623
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 301623Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7168
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 8647
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 8003
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3316
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 9798
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5538
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RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 001999

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL NELSON MEETS PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d).

11. (C) Summary. In a meeting May 27 with Pakistan President Musharraf, Codel Nelson discussed the political and economic situation and efforts to combat extremism in Pakistan. Musharraf expressed appreciation for U.S. assistance and understanding on the strategic issue of terrorism and hoped close cooperation between in the countries would continue. He shared his beliefs that the recent elections have marginalized extremism and "talibanization," but indicated that increased U.S. support, particularly with intelligence sharing, was needed. Musharraf elaborated on the "ingredients" of South Waziristan peace agreement, stating that tribes must expel extremists from their tribal areas, cease cross-border transport activity, and accept the established "methodology of punishment" for violating the agreements. He commented that while he sees the agreements as reasonable, they are less than fool-proof, requiring what he calls a three-pronged approach: military, political, and socio-economic engagement. Musharraf conceded that this was a long-term strategy whose execution had been delayed by lack of funding, but would seek to work jointly with Ambassador and the FATA Development Authority to ensure effective implementation. Furthermore, he acknowledged the need for consonance in political and military messages and actions, seeking unity across the government to mitigate the politicization of terrorism. When questioned regarding the role the U.S. should be playing in the region, Musharraf stressed that he, and many in Pakistan's government, viewed U.S. direction and intent as good but that existing conflicts would require time, patience, and resolve. End Summary.

12. (U) Codel Nelson--Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE) and Representatives F. Allen Boyd (D-FL) and Nicholas Lampson (D-TX)--and Ambassador met May 27 with President Musharraf in Rawalpindi.

13. (C) Musharraf opened the meeting by expressing his gratitude for the Codel's visit, believing these visits to be especially useful interactions to foster understanding of the current situation at a stage when bilateral cooperation was necessary to face the strategic threat of global terrorism. Nelson thanked Musharraf for Pakistan's help in the war on terror being "fought together," calling Pakistan an ally from the beginning who plays a central role in securing sanctuary areas occupied by "outsiders" and extremists. Noting that the Codel had just met with Prime Minister Gilani and Chief of Army Staff Kayani, Nelson asked Musharraf whether he believed there were ways in which the U.S. could be more helpful in the continuing battle against extremism and terrorism.

14. (C) Musharraf replied that, in his view, Pakistan was convinced it was fighting its own war and, although Pakistani gains against extremists might jointly serve U.S. objectives, they are being made in pursuit of Pakistan's own interests. He indicated that democratic elections helped marginalize religious groups in the border regions, such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where moderate forces have emerged in areas previously fraught with talibanization. Musharraf claimed that people in these areas have expressed disapproval of talibanized governments that suppressed minorities and welcomed army intervention to expel extremists. Nevertheless, tribals are fearful that extremists may return if and when the military pulls out, necessitating continued support and security. Ensuring they do not return, Musharraf explained, will require increased intelligence sharing from the U.S to help locate and target these extremists. He contended that due to past successes, extremists are "on the run" and operating in smaller groups, requiring increased intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support from the U.S. Musharraf acknowledged that Pakistan does have some problems with identifying, locating, and targeting extremists, but insisted that lag time in U.S. intelligence sharing was a contributing factor. As such, Musharraf argued for a more involved Pakistani role in intelligence gathering and dissemination to facilitate quicker responses to extremist actions and movements.

15. (C) Sensing that questions would arise regarding the South Waziristan peace agreements, Musharraf indicated that tribes and their leaders appear to be able to relate to the

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agreements' three "ingredients." The first requirement is to discontinue support for and expel any extremists in their areas. Although he believed the people would accept this stipulation, he recognized that adherence could be difficult to guarantee and covert tribal support to extremists would always be a risk. The second requirement is to cease all transport activity, which Musharraf described as extremist movements within the tribal areas and across the border with Afghanistan. He imagined this would be hard for people to accept given their resolve to fight the jihad. He labeled such determination as a main impetus behind potential negotiations with extremists Baitullah Mehsud to limit and/or cease cross-border incursions into Afghanistan, although he distanced himself from and did not endorse such negotiations.

Finally, Musharraf explained that the last requirement of the agreements is acceptance of the government's methodology of punishment for violating the agreements. While he did not explain what punishments would entail, he made clear that terms were harsh and violations would be "punished severely."

16. (C) Musharraf asserted that he found the agreements reasonable and though they may not be able to fully guarantee success in expelling extremism, he believed this was indicative of the current climate and could not be avoided. Therefore, the army, with the help of the government, must be proactive in identifying cross-border incursions and enforcing the agreements through a three-pronged approach. First, military engagement would help enforce the agreements through presence and providing security to allow compliance. In this regard, Musharraf advocated the need to establish four additional wings of the Frontier Corps (FC) - to the existing twelve - and a sector headquarters, requesting U.S. financial support to do so. Second, Musharraf stressed increased political engagement, citing the need for consonance of message and action between the political and military arms of the government. Only by engaging politically with the provincial governments and tribal leaders, he said, can they overcome the urge for appeasement with extremists. Third, he emphasized socio-economic engagement as critical to reaching tribals and winning their support. Musharraf admitted that such engagement was a long-term strategy which he pledged to pursue with the help of the Ambassador and the FATA Development Authority. He did

note, however, that implementation of that strategy has been delayed by a lack of funding and, despite indication of U.S. support, "nothing has been delivered."

17. (C) Congressman Boyd acknowledged Pakistan as the "epicenter" of the war on terror and thanked Musharraf for Pakistan's continued support. He commented, however, that the impending change of U.S. administration would likely generate reevaluation of current policies regarding allocation of U.S. resources in Pakistan and elsewhere in this fight. Boyd said that one area of concern in the USG was Pakistan's ability to enforce the peace agreements, citing past failures. When asked about the army's ability to enforce the agreements if the tribes failed to do so, Musharraf replied that not only did the army have the ability to enforce the agreements, but that the terms of the agreement were harsh and violations would be "punished severely." When Boyd inquired about the potential for enforcement causing political problems, Musharraf responded that he did not envision disturbances. He claimed that elders with whom the agreements were reached would be honor bound to punish violators and the use of jirgas to solve disputes would further ensure enforcement.

18. (C) Congressman Lampson noted that he had many Pakistani-American constituents and that he, and they, wondered how the U.S. might be able to play a more effective leadership role in the region to alleviate ongoing conflict. Musharraf vehemently proclaimed that the U.S. had a vital role to play in the region, but that it would have to endure criticism and hardship in a long and difficult struggle. Palestine was at the core of all issues in the Middle East, Musharraf asserted, as it has an indirect bearing on nearly all other conflicts therein. He emphasized that the U.S. should take on a more neutral role in the Israeli-Palestinian issue due to tendencies for the U.S. and Israel to be seen as one in the Muslim world. He suggested, therefore, that the European Union (EU) become more involved, perhaps with other Arab states, as more visibly neutral mediators in the

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conflict. In reference to Iraq, Musharraf insisted that the U.S. must not withdraw prematurely lest risk vast instability in the region. Doing so, he declared, would unleash sectarian division which Iran could use to gain leverage over other gulf states. Though viewing conflicts in the region as a "complicated affair," Musharraf indicated hopefulness, citing recent Israeli-Syrian discussions over return of the Golan Heights as a potentially positive step in isolating Iran from Hezbollah.

19. (C) He also contended that the U.S. should "stay the course" in Afghanistan and Pakistan, claiming that if the U.S.-led coalition were to withdraw, the situation would revert to lawlessness seen during the 1990's. Musharraf explained that experimentation with democracy, within both Afghanistan and Pakistan, is hindered by a lack of understanding that must be countered by continued institution building to strengthen the center. He believes U.S. direction and objectives are correct, but stressed that building democratic institutions in the face of conflict and misunderstanding would take time. He acknowledged that the U.S. had a "very tough job to do" but it was necessary and, without U.S. support, uncontrollable refugee problems and "mayhem" could ensue. Musharraf alleged that the Government of Pakistan (GOP) understands the U.S. role in the war on terror but the "common man" does not fully appreciate strategic implications and significance. He clearly saw the GOP as responsible for educating the Pakistani people politically regarding Pakistan's role in the war on terror. Particularly that Pakistan's efforts, though they may help U.S. interests and objectives, are carried out for Pakistan and its interests first and foremost.

10. (U) CODEL Nelson did not clear this cable.
PATTERSON